

The Effects of Neighborhood Deprivation on Cardiovascular Disease Among Refugees: Results From a Natural Experiment in Denmark

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Refugees are among the most disadvantaged individuals in society. There is limited evidence on the factors that lead to worsened health among this vulnerable group. We tested the hypothesis that refugee placement in more socioeconomically deprived neighborhoods led to worsened cardiovascular outcomes. We exploited a natural experiment in which incoming refugees to Denmark during 1986-1998 were dispersed to neighborhoods of varying degrees of socioeconomic deprivation in a quasi-random fashion (N=49,305). Using Danish register data, we examined the effects of initial neighborhood deprivation on cardiovascular outcomes in subsequent decades. Placement in more deprived neighborhoods led to increased risk of hyperlipidemia (0.62% points; 95% CI: 0.01, 1.23; p=0.04) and a marginally statistically significantly increased risk of diabetes (0.59% points; 95%CI: -0.03, 0.68; p=0.07). We found no effects on hypertension, heart attack, and stroke. Neighborhood characteristics may be an important determinant of refugee health and should be taken into account by resettlement agencies.